

Wind generation pledge being met in Western states

Utilities: MidAmerican Energy Holdings brings a new wind farm on line for Utah consumption

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Proving that its promises weren't just a lot of hot air, Mid-American Energy Holdings is making good on its pledge to increase the amount of electricity it generates from wind power for its Utah customers.

The company, which does business in Utah as Rocky Mountain Power, said it has brought a new wind farm on line near Arlington, Ore., that will provide an additional 100 megawatts of electricity for its customers in Utah and the five other Western states where it operates.

"All of our generating units operate as a coordinated system so our Utah customers will share in the benefits from that new [generating] resource," Rocky Mountain Power spokesman Dave Eskelsen said.

As part of its acquisition of Rocky Mountain Power's parent PacifiCorp earlier this year, MidAmerican promised to do its best to have 400 megawatts of wind power in its generation portfolio by the end of 2007.

Eskelsen noted with the startup of the Arlington facility known as the Leaning Juniper 1 project, its recent purchase of the 140.5 megawatt Marengo wind project near Dayton, Wash., and several other projects in Wyoming, the company is already within 64 megawatts of that goal.

In a statement announcing the Leaning Juniper 1 facility had reached commercial operation, Rocky Mountain Power president Rich Walje said that project is an indication the company intends to continue to "diversify our generation portfolio with cost-effective, environmentally prudent resources."

Tim Wagner, director of the Sierra Club's Utah Smart Energy Campaign, said Mid-American is sticking to PacifiCorp's earlier commitment to acquire 1,400 megawatts of new renewable energy resources by 2015.

"Some of those projects may be a little slow to come on the grid but they [MidAmerican] have demonstrated a strong interest in developing renewable resources in the Intermountain West," Wagner said.

Interest in developing wind energy appears to be growing, he said, not just with MidAmerican but other companies as well.

UPC Wind Management of Newton, Mass., for example, wants to build a \$400 million electricity-generating wind farm in northern Beaver County that eventually could provide enough power for 60,000 households.

Rocky Mountain Power said the Leaning Juniper 1 project is expected to generate enough energy to serve more than 30,000 homes each year with its 67 wind turbines each generating approximately 1.5 megawatts of electricity.

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